DIGITAL CERTIFICATE

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A digital certificate includes framing characters defining a protected area. The protected

5   area contains a selected set of components, including text-based components and binary-based

components, and the certificate serves as a transport container for such components. A message

digest or hashing algorithm applied to the protected area provides consistent results despite

modifications to the certificate outside the protected area. A digital signature provides

authentication of source and content integrity. Digital certificates under the present invention

10   may be applied to a variety of purposes including but not limited to proof of ownership, gift

certificates, upgrade purchases, and other applications where verification of source and content

integrity are desirable.